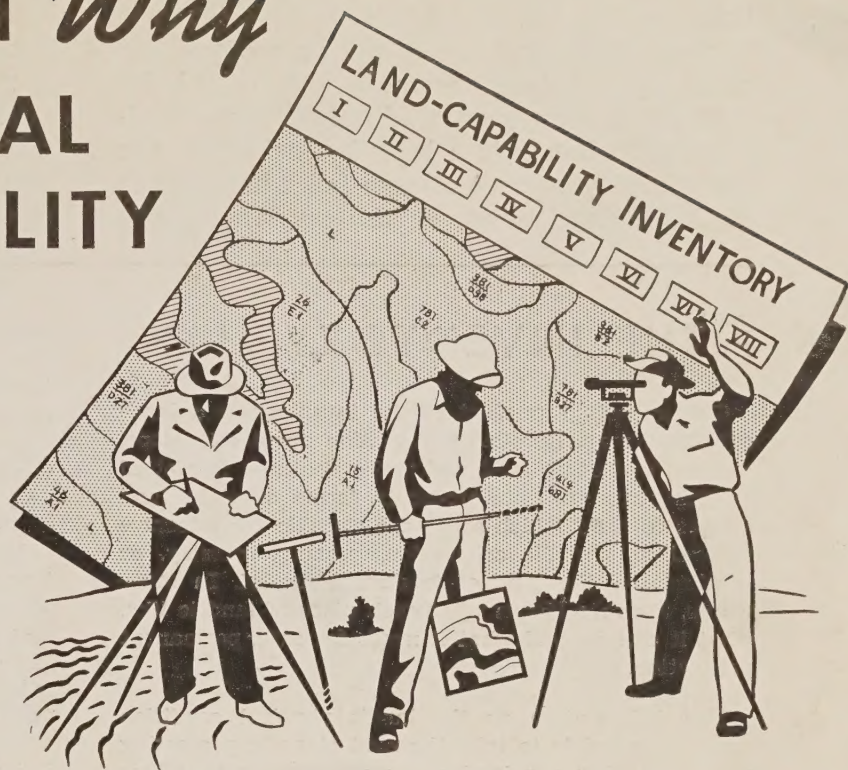


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Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

3 The *What* and *Why* of the NATIONAL LAND-CAPABILITY INVENTORY

GOOD MANAGEMENT OF
ANY ENTERPRISE REQUIRES
INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF
ITS BASIC ASSETS



No enterprise is more important than the production of food and fiber and the development of water supplies. But we don't yet have a complete inventory of our land, the most basic asset of this enterprise.

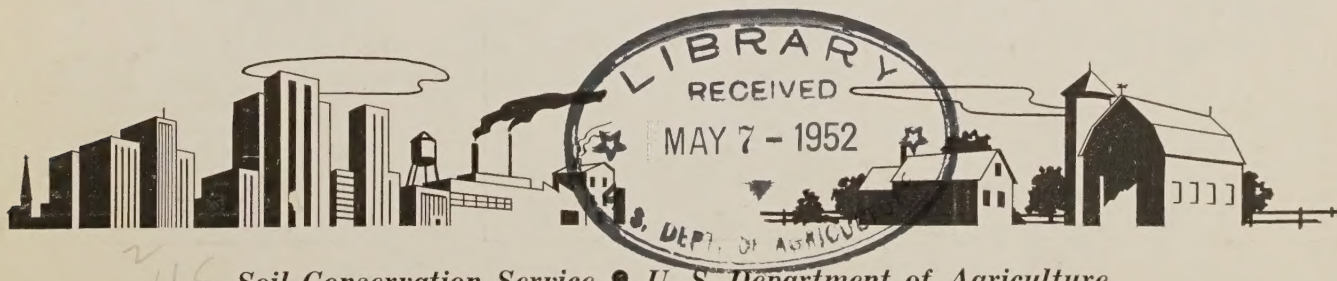


As a Nation of people who want to keep well-fed, well-clothed, well-housed, and well-supplied with water for municipal, industrial, and agricultural use, we need to know as soon as possible all we can about our land resources. An inventory that provides this information so vital to agriculture, industry, government,

and the many other segments of our national structure in a readily usable form is being made now by the Soil Conservation Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, with the cooperation of state agricultural experiment stations and other agencies.

Called the National Land-Capability Inventory, it is a scientific study that provides factual information on land conditions and the varying capability of land for productive use without damage or loss.

Only 19 out of every 100 people in the Nation live on farms. These 19 grow the food and fiber, the tobacco, and a great deal of the wood, fats, and oils used by the other 81 of us who live and work in towns and cities. They produce for themselves and for us on some 6 million farms and ranches including more than a billion acres of land. What happens on that land—and to that land—affects the prosperity and well-being of everyone, this year, next year, and for all years to come. That is why this National Land-Capability Inventory is so important to the entire population.



U.S. Soil Conservation Service • U. S. Department of Agriculture

Each watershed, and each farm usually, contains several different kinds of land. Some is first-class cropland; some can be cropped but needs special care; some is best suited for grazing, forestry, or wildlife. You can't always tell what is in a book by looking at the cover, and you can't always tell what land is good for by looking at the surface. That's

where the land-capability inventory comes in. Because those of us who use the land don't yet know the capability of each acre and the protection it needs, we often put our land to uses for which it is not suited, or is poorly suited. As a result, we fail to get the most out of it, and frequently damage it in the process.

• THE INVENTORY MAP

One important product of the inventory is a land-capability map. Detailed information about soil, slope, erosion, and other land and water features is plotted on this map and interpreted in terms of eight land classes to show which areas are suitable for intensive cultivation, periodic cultivation, grazing, forestry, or wildlife, and the kind of treatment needed. In other words, the map shows what each piece of land is like, what it can do, and what it needs for safe, permanent production.

This information on the land's physical condition makes it possible to take the next steps in protecting and developing our land and water resources. These steps include changing the use of land, wherever necessary, to suit its capability and applying the conservation practices it needs to prevent erosion, conserve water, and maintain, improve, or adjust production.

The map and inventory information is available to anyone who wants to know about the land. Farmers and ranchers, of course, are the ones who need the land-capability inventory most of all because they own and use more than half the land area of the Nation. The inventory is giving them the best scientific basis they have ever had for sound land management and conservation treatment. Similarly, the inventory will provide the information needed by the operators of more than 200 million acres of privately owned forest and railroad lands.

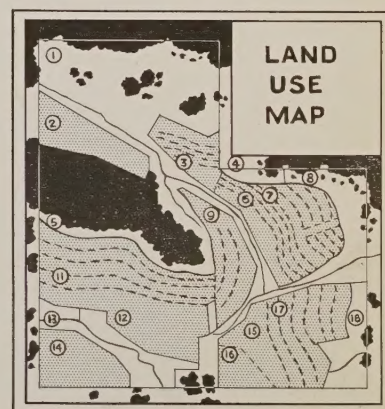
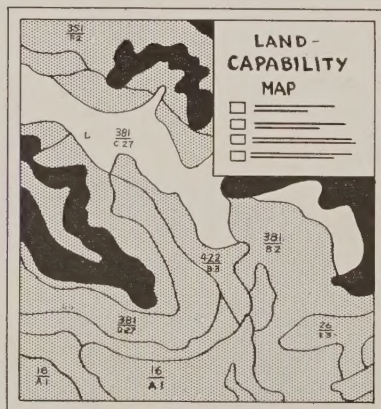
Local, state, and federal government agencies find this kind of information valuable in the management and treatment of the 400 million acres of publicly

owned land they administer. In conducting public programs, information about private and public land is essential to land development, land valuation, education, valley development, municipal water and sewage projects, irrigation and drainage and other public works; also transportation and communication planning, and many other activities.

In addition, the inventory serves the needs of countless aspects of industry, business, science, and civic affairs requiring knowledge of the physical condition and productive capacity of the land.

There are many instances where land-capability information of this kind not only would have prevented hardship and needless waste of money, soil and water, but would have averted actual failure of entire agricultural or industrial developments. Learning the facts about our land is a fundamental step in improving American agriculture and holding down the cost of production per unit, per acre, and per farm. Food, fiber, and other agricultural and forest products will be harvested longer, over a larger area, and at lower cost from land that is used according to its capability and treated and protected according to its needs. From such land, also, will come a more dependable supply of water for our municipal, industrial, and agricultural needs.

The Soil Conservation Service is making this National Land-Capability Inventory as rapidly as it can, and thus far has covered about one-fourth of the Nation's farm and ranch land with the kind of analysis necessary to serve these many interests. Its staff surveys some 30 million acres each year. At this rate, it will take about 30 years to complete the inventory on all privately owned lands.



• WHAT WE'LL HAVE WHEN THE INVENTORY IS COMPLETE



- Information on how much land we have of different kinds—what its present condition is—what conservation and improvement measures it needs—what undeveloped potential farm land we have.
- Recommendations to guide landowners and operators in carrying out conservation programs—in making crop and acreage adjustments—in putting each piece of land to safe, productive use.



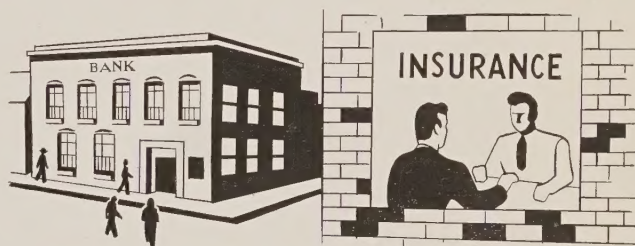
- Knowledge Congress can use in developing policies and programs for agriculture and many other fields affected by the productivity and capability of the Nation's land.



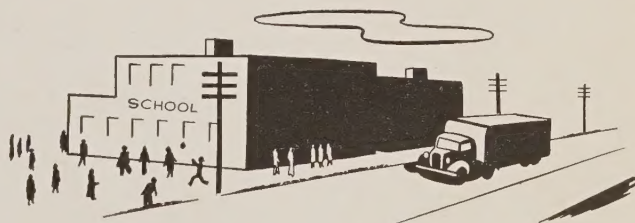
- Groundwork for flood control, reforestation, water-supply and sedimentation studies, and valley development programs.



- Guidance for the Soil Conservation Service, the Production and Marketing Administration, soil conservation districts, and other agricultural agencies and organizations.



- Basic information of value to credit agencies in determining soundness of proposed loans or other financial assistance, especially for land purchase or development.

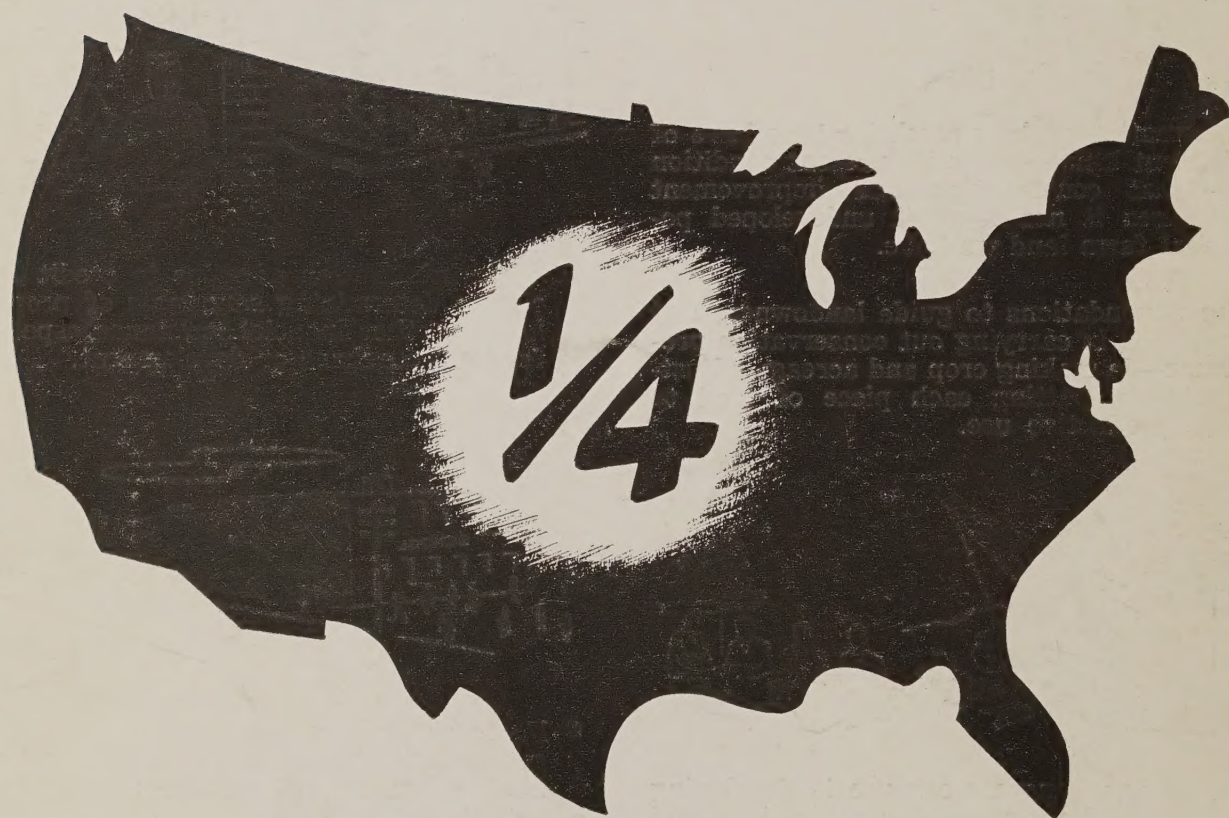


- Facts needed by local, state, and federal government agencies that plan roads, schools, land valuation, and similar public service activities.



- Data needed by manufacturers, railroads, banks, telephone and power companies, contractors, and many other branches of industry and business affected by land conditions, and water supply.

*The National Land-
Capability Inventory...*



... Completed